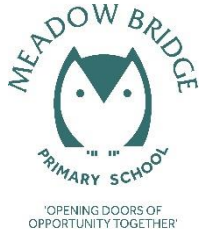




'OPENING DOORS OF
OPPORTUNITY TOGETHER'

EDUCATIONAL AND RESIDENTIAL VISITS POLICY

FEBRUARY 2025



EDUCATIONAL AND RESIDENTIAL VISITS POLICY

School Mission Statement

Meadow Bridge Primary School aims to foster a safe, happy, and caring environment where each child's personal development is nurtured. Every child's educational journey is enhanced, and their lives enriched through stimulating learning experiences. Equal emphasis will be placed on pastoral care and on ensuring each individual reaches his or her academic potential, equipping them for the future.

Our School Aims:

- To provide a balanced, stimulating, and relevant curriculum, through high quality teaching and learning which fulfils the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- To develop each child spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically, through the day-to-day running of the school.
- To encourage qualities of independence, initiative, and self-confidence in each child.
- To help pupils develop and celebrate an understanding of their own culture and promote respect for that of others.
- To provide the highest standards of pastoral care and child protection/ safeguarding.
- To develop effective home/school links so that children can benefit from their teachers and parents/guardians working in partnership.
- To establish and maintain acceptable forms of behaviour within a secure and positive school environment, encouraging self-discipline and an understanding of rights and responsibilities.
- To develop children's awareness of the local and wider community and of the effects that their actions can have on both.
- To maintain ongoing links with local pre-school provision and post-primary schools to which pupils transfer.
- To show commitment through being a health-conscious school and supporting the wellbeing of children, who are therefore better able to learn and develop.
- To make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and ethos of the school for both staff and pupils and to engage with the wider community.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

- This policy covers all educational visits that occur within, around, and also outside the school premises.
- This ranges from walks around the locality to visits to places further afield.
- It also includes outdoor and adventure activities/trips.
- The term 'Educational Visits' refers to: 'all academic, sporting, cultural, creative and personal development activities, which take place away from the young person's school, and make a significant contribution to learning and development of those participating' - UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme:
- We are a school committed to promoting the rights of our children.
- Our work in this aspect of school life promotes the following articles:
 - Article 3: The best interests of our children must be a top priority in all our actions.
 - Article 13: We have the right to find out things in various ways as long as it doesn't harm or offend others in any way.
 - Article 31: We have the right to play and rest.

Aims and Objectives for Educational Visits

Our fundamental aim at Meadow Bridge Primary School is to provide the best possible education for all our pupils. It is the aim of the school to place a high value on diversity, treating every member of the school community as an individual, and meeting the needs of all. In doing this, we aim, therefore, to raise the achievement of all the children in the school. Educational Visits and Outdoor and Adventurous Activities are an integral part of the children's education at Meadow Bridge Primary School. They offer opportunities to enrich the curriculum, enabling the children to have first-hand experience of a wide range of topics and activities.

Context for Policy

In Meadow Bridge Primary School we appreciate the enhanced opportunities provided for our children by engaging in school trips and educational visits and are eager to offer our children a range of additional experiences to enhance their education beyond the normal school day. Such educational visits help children to develop a wide range of valuable personal and social skills. Safety is of paramount importance and to ensure clarity and consistency of good practice, it is the policy of Meadow Bridge Primary School to take the following actions before, during, and after all school trips/educational visits. This policy has been written in the best interests of all involved and in accordance with EA Guidelines (October 2017).

Legal Context

The employing authority is legally obliged to ensure that the health and safety of its employees and pupils is safeguarded. This duty is imposed through occupational health and safety statute, specifically under the 'Health and Safety at Work (N.I.) Order' 1978, and places responsibility upon employing authorities to ensure that their management arrangements in general, but also those arrangements which encompass specific activities such as educational visits, are adequate to protect the health and safety of all those in any way affected by such employer's undertakings.

The manner in which such arrangements are developed is through the process of a risk assessment, the outcome of which acts as the basis for the staff to establish what needs to be put in place to allow the visit to proceed in a way which sufficiently manages the risks to which participants may be exposed.

The Board of Governors of a school has a statutory duty under Article 7 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003, to safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils at the school at all times when the pupils are in lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school.

The basic principles of child protection must always be borne in mind when undertaking an educational visit. The pupils' welfare must always be paramount and this overrides all other considerations. All pupils have the fundamental right to be protected from harm. Pupils have a right to be heard, to be listened to, and to be taken seriously. Careful consideration must be given to pupils who have special educational needs, as such children may be especially vulnerable.

Categories of Educational Visits

- Educational Visits undertaken by the pupils of Meadow Bridge Primary School will not involve an overnight stay and will be in categories 1 and 2 of the EA guidelines. *[Residential Trips are considered in a separate section at the end of this policy.]*
 - Category 1: Basic Visits which take place on a regular basis and occur largely within establishment hours, eg sporting fixtures, swimming pool visits, and outings.
 - Category 2: One-off day/evening excursions, eg field study trips, theatre visits, business/education visits, regional sporting fixtures.
 - Nature of Educational Visits: The school organises a wide range of educational visits. These may include walks around the local area, visits by coach to places of interest to support the curriculum; and/or day visits to places of historical, environmental, religious, or other interest, to support specific curriculum areas.

Risk Assessments

- In Meadow Bridge Primary School we undertake a Risk Assessment before every trip. (See Risk Assessment Policy).
- Educational visits cannot be entirely risk-free.

- The aim, therefore, must be to contain risks within acceptable levels. Care must be taken not to expose the child to unacceptable physical or psychological risk, particularly on those occasions when the educational visit aims to exercise the individual's sense of adventure. Fundamental to the planning process of any educational visit is the process of risk assessment.
- Staff at the venue should be asked to provide evidence that they have undertaken a risk assessment and that it is a safe location for the children.
- Procedure for Running Educational Visits: A set procedure is followed for all educational visits, although the nature of each visit will determine the level of preparation required. A visit will proceed only when the Group Leader is satisfied that all reasonable preparations have been made. Risk assessments are made for all educational visits.
- This necessitates that the Group Leader, where possible, has made a pre-visit in order to be able to plan for the visit and to conduct a risk assessment appropriately.
- Risk assessments must be simple, manageable, proportional, suitable, and sufficient. The system must:
 - identify significant hazards;
 - assess the risk of harm;
 - put control measures in place;
 - check if anything else is needed;
 - use a simple assessment language – high/medium/low.
 - Risk assessment considers the site and its environment, the group, the activity and the leaders.

Supervision and Staff Ratios

- Supervisory roles should be closely aligned to the roles and responsibilities undertaken by staff on a visit.
- Pupil to staff ratios for educational visits are not prescribed in law.
- There will be a full complement of adult supervision and this will reflect the guidelines, as closely as possible.
- These guidelines are as follows:

AGE GROUP RATIOS: PRIMARY

- Foundation Stage (P1/P2) one adult for up to a maximum of ten children.
- Key Stages 1 and 2 (P3- P7) one adult for up to a maximum of fifteen children.
- Among the supervisors there should, where possible, be one who is trained in First Aid.
- There should be a staff member who is identified as the Group Leader.
- Each supervisor should have a written list of names of children in their care.

Vetting

- In the context of Educational Visits, we follow the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- Supervision will be undertaken by staff members who have had a full police check carried out by EA and students from Higher Educational Institutes who are on placement in the school and have had appropriate police checks carried out by their training institution, may also be supervisors on trips.

Transport

- The management of the school must be satisfied that all the transport arrangements meet the legal statutory requirements for the type of journey proposed.
- The transport selected must provide each child with a single seat and while in a bus, taxi or car, the child must be protected by a seat belt.
- Where leaders or parents choose to transport pupils in their cars, we will:
 - satisfy ourselves that the vehicle is licensed and insured for purpose – this could involve asking for a copy of the insurance details;
 - seek the agreement of the parents of the pupils involved – this should be in writing;
 - satisfy ourselves that private car users do not carry more passengers than the number of seat belts available.

Communicating with Parents

- In Meadow Bridge Primary School we have an effective, two-way communication process between the school, centre, and parents, for all visits. This ensures that parents are made aware of the purpose and nature of the visit and will ensure that parents inform the school about any particular needs and issues of their child, relevant to the visit.
- Information to parents may include:
 - dates of the visit or series of visits;
 - destination details;
 - times of departure and return and whether parents will be required to meet their children on return;
 - the location from where the pupils will be collected and returned;
 - mode(s) of travel including the name of any travel company;
 - information regarding lunch and/or spending money (where relevant);
 - cost of the trip, this will be kept to a minimum. Teachers will inform the Leadership Team if a child seems to be unable to meet the payment, so that appropriate pastoral arrangements can be made;
 - a request for written/electronic parental permission for the trip.

Parental Consent

- Parental consent must be obtained for all educational visits. This will be done for each visit or outing.

Volunteers in a Supervisory Role

- To satisfy staffing ratios, it may be necessary to involve persons other than staff members as volunteers, eg parents.
- These adults can play a very valuable part in ensuring the safety of group participants while on a visit.
- Prior to any visit, however, they should be clear about their role and responsibilities during the visit.

Critical Incidents

- A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.
- In the event of a critical incident occurring during a school visit the school's critical incident management plan will be implemented.

Prior to the Visit

- All staff will be made aware of the Educational Visits Checklist.
- The Group Leader must ensure that a risk assessment is completed prior to the trip.
- All staff must also have a list of all names of the children on the trip. He/she must also check that there are Health Plans/Medicines for those children who may require them, in accordance with the school's First Aid and Medication Policy.
- The Group Leader must ensure that there are black bags for rubbish collection, a roll of tissue paper, and plastic bags, in case a pupil becomes unwell on the bus.
- The First Aid Kit should also be brought on the trip.
- The Group Leader must have a contact number for the school and for the Principal and also a contact number of each member of staff on the trip.

During the Visit

- Children should be within the sight of a supervisor at all times.
- Class groupings should stay together except where the venue requires them to break into smaller groups.
- Supervisors should be aware of any dietary requirements or medical/physical needs of any of the children in his/her group.
- In the event of a child needing significant medical attention whilst on the trip or travelling to/from a trip, the school will be contacted as soon as possible after assistance has been given or help has been requested.
- On returning to school the supervisor should remain with the child until he/she has been collected by an adult or in the case of older children a check has been made to ensure that the correct procedures for going home are being followed.

Reporting Back on Return to School

- The Group Leader should report back to the School Leadership Team on return to school and provide a brief account of the trip.
- Any incidents, accidents, or injuries that have occurred should be reported.
- Accidents, injuries, or incidents should be recorded in the Incident Book.
- The Principal/Vice Principal will advise regarding any further action to be taken with reference to either accidents and/or incidents which occurred on a trip.

Personnel

- For each visit, of whatever duration, a Group Leader is identified.

Board of Governors

- The Board of Governors is responsible for:
 - ensuring that guidance is available to inform the school policy, practices, and procedures relating to the health & safety of pupils on educational visits;
 - ensuring that the Principal is supported in matters relating to educational visits and that he has the appropriate time and expertise to fulfil his responsibilities;
 - asking questions about a visit's educational objectives and how they will be met;
 - ensuring that visits are approved as necessary before bookings are confirmed;
 - ensuring that the Principal has taken all reasonable and practicable measures to include pupils with special educational needs or medical needs on an educational visit;
 - ensure that they review procedures with the Principal on an annual basis.

Group Leader

- The function of the Group Leader is to:
 - ensure educational visits meet the employer's and school's requirements;
 - support the Governors with approval and other decisions;
 - assess the competence of prospective leaders and staff;
 - ensure that the risk assessment meets requirements;
 - organise training and induction (where necessary);
 - ensure parents are informed and have given consent;
 - organise emergency arrangements;
 - keep records of visits, accidents, or incident reports;
 - review systems and monitor practice.

The Principal

- The Principal is responsible for:
 - ensuring approval for visits is given, including liaising with the EA where appropriate;
 - ensuring that the Governing Body is made aware of visits;
 - ensuring that arrangements are in place for the educational objectives of a visit to be inclusive; being aware of the need for best value;
 - ensuring that all accreditation or verification of providers has been met;
 - ensuring that visits are evaluated to inform the operation of future visits;
 - ensuring that each visit has an appropriately competent Group Leader;
 - ensuring that all staff members are aware of the school's policy and procedures in relation to educational visits;
 - ensuring that the school has an emergency procedure in case of a major incident, which has been discussed and reviewed by staff.
 - This emergency procedure must include getting appropriate support and advice from the EA. (See the school's Critical Incident Policy).

Group Leader

- The Group Leader has overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit, including direct responsibility for the pupils' health, safety and welfare.

The Group Leader must:

- be approved to carry out the visit, suitably competent and knowledgeable about the school's and EA's policy and procedures;
- plan and prepare for the visit and assess the risks;
- assist in the completion of the risk assessment;
- define the roles and responsibilities of other staff and pupils and ensure effective supervision of what they do.

Volunteers

- Volunteers who are not staff members must:
 - understand and agree the expectations of their role;
 - understand their relationship to the pupils, staff and visit leaders;
 - recognise the limits of their responsibility;
 - ensure that they are not left in sole charge of pupils unless this has been formally agreed through a risk assessment;
 - follow instructions from teachers;
 - raise concerns for pupil welfare with the Group Leader.

RESIDENTIAL VISITS

Residential visits are planned annually for Primary 6 and Primary 7 year-groups. In addition to all of the above arrangements, procedures, and regulations which apply when planning and participating in Educational Day Visits, the following factors are carefully taken into account.

Communication with Parents/Guardians:

- Parents/guardians are given an acceptable amount of advance notice of provisional arrangements for the residential, to enable a decision to be taken regarding their child's participation in the visit and also to assist with budgeting for the deposit/final payments.
- A detailed itinerary is provided to parents/guardians prior to departure.
- A briefing meeting is held for parents/guardians, to include information regarding arrangements for contacting the Group Leader in the case of a home emergency.
- Parents will be made aware of the Code of Conduct and the possible sanctions which will be in place.
- Written consent and emergency parent/guardian contact details are obtained.

Prior to a Residential Visit:

- Where the residential visit involves outdoor or adventurous activities, the Group Leaders are satisfied that appropriate structures and systems are in place in relation to child protection / health and safety, and that staff are competent to provide the activities.
- Confirmation will be sought that provider has all appropriate insurances and risk assessments in place to cover all aspects of the visit.
- Overnight accommodation will have been assessed as appropriate in terms of its suitability and safety for the group.
- Pupils will be briefed on the Code of Conduct for the residential trip and possible sanctions which pertain.

During a Residential Visit:

- The Group Leader will continue to monitor risks at all times during the visit and be ready to change to a contingency plan if necessary.
- First aid/medication/emergency action plan will be carefully managed.
- Any proposed changes to the agreed programme for the residential will have been risk assessed by the Group Leader prior to agreement.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- It is the responsibility of the Group Leader/Principal to ensure that emergency arrangements are in place for all educational and residential visits.
- This includes:
 - ensuring that all involved know who the emergency contact is in the school;
 - having access to the Critical Incident Policy;
 - ensuring that parental contact information is up-to-date and accessible.

POLICY REVIEW

- As with all policies, it is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and the practice that it describes.
- On a day-to-day basis this responsibility is delegated to the Principal who will report back to the Governors as appropriate.
- This policy is a working document, and will be reviewed in consultation with pupils, staff, parents, and Governors.